

Ford Motor Company

Automotive Safety Office
Environmental and Safety Engineering

August 4, 2003

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Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 03S03 – Certain 1999 to 2001 Model Year Ford Explorer / Mercury Mountaineer 4-door, 1999 to 2000 Model Year Ford Explorer 2-door, and 2001 Model Year Ford Explorer Sport and Sport Trac vehicles equipped with speed control and 4.0L SOHC engine.

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 1999 to 2001 model year Explorer / Mountaineer 4-door, 1999 to 2000 Explorer 2-door, and 2001 Sport and Sport Trac vehicles equipped with speed control and the 4.0L SOHC engine to inspect and replace if necessary the speed control cable.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 499,988 vehicles (448,005 United States and Federalized Territories, 34,305 in Canada and 17,678 in other countries.)
- Affect on Vehicle Operation – If the strand cover on the speed control cable becomes flared at the end, the speed control cable may bind when the speed control is activated. The throttle return spring force may not be sufficient to overcome the binding condition when the speed control is disengaged.
- Service Procedure – Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the speed control cable inspected and replaced if necessary.

Attached is the detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 – Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report.

Sincerely,


James P. Vondale



49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
03S03 – 1999-2001 MODEL YEAR EXPLORER/MOUNTAINEER 4-DOOR,
1999-2000 EXPLORER 2-DOOR
AND 2001 EXPLORER SPORT AND SPORT TRAC
EQUIPPED WITH SPEED CONTROL

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Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company (Ford) submits the following information concerning a safety recall action that it is voluntarily initiating.

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

The vehicles affected are 1999 to 2001 model year Explorer / Mountaineer 4-door, built between March 5, 1999 and December 24, 2000 at the St. Louis Assembly Plant and March 5, 1999 and September 22, 2000 at the Louisville Assembly Plant; the 1999 to 2000 Explorer 2-door built between March 5, 1999 and August 7, 2000 at the St. Louis Assembly Plant and March 5, 1999 and July 26, 2000 at the Louisville Assembly Plant; and the 2001 Explorer Sport and Sport Trac built between September 24, 1999 and July 31, 2000 at the Louisville Assembly Plant. All affected vehicles are equipped with speed control and 4.0L SOHC engine.

Because these vehicles are not produced in VIN order, information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by either calling Ford's toll-free line (1-800-392-3673) or by contacting a local Ford dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

573.6 (c) (3) – Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Approximately 499,988 vehicles; (448,005 United States and Federalized Territories, 34,305 in Canada and 17,678 in other countries.)

573.6 (c) (4) – Estimated Percentage of Affected Vehicles with the Condition

Unknown.

573.6 (c) (5) – Description of Defect

The speed control cable assembly consists of an outer plastic cable conduit through which the wire cable strands pass. A strand cover protects the cable strands and there is a design overlap of the cover to the conduit. Without sufficient overlap, the strand cover impacts the conduit end fitting during speed control engagement. Repeated instances of this may result in flaring the cover end. The flared strand cover may result in a binding condition between the strand cover and cable conduit when the strand cover enters the conduit under speed control activation. Throttle spring return force may not be sufficient to overcome the binding condition when speed control is disengaged. The condition may occur anywhere along the range of operation of speed control. Depending on the position at which the binding occurred, drivers may experience a high idle or a condition where it would appear speed control would not disengage. Braking function would be maintained though stopping distances may be increased.

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573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On December 12, 2002 the Critical Concern Review Group in Ford was notified of reports alleging speed control disengagement issues. To monitor field performance to determine whether a defect trend was developing data searches were conducted by the Enhanced Concern Identification (ECI) group. Engineering reviewed field returned speed control cables and found cables with flared strand covers. Testing was performed and identified that flaring may cause the cable to bind. Supplier reviews were then conducted with the service and production suppliers of the cables and concluded that the flaring was caused by insufficient overlap of the strand cover to the conduit with the production supplier. Additional testing was conducted and identified that the strand cover was susceptible to shrinkage from thermal cycling and contributed to the insufficient overlap. As of July 15, 2003 Ford identified 14 reports of disengagement issues attributable to binding of the cable. There are no known accidents or injuries attributed to this condition.

573.6 (c) (8) Service Program

Owners will be instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the speed control cable inspected and replaced if necessary.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin August 29, 2003 and be completed by August 29, 2003. Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to notification of a safety recall was provided to the agency on February 28, 2003.

573.6 (c) (9) – Press statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

Ford will make a public statement concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford will be forwarded when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 03S03 to this action.

573.13 (c) (2) - Ending Date for Reimbursement Eligibility

The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is September 8, 2003.